

Session III – Connecting People and the Ecosystems That Support Them
11:00 AM

Strategic Impact Assessment and Policy Conflicts in Coastal Regulatory Zones of Deltaic Sunderbands in India: a Case Study

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Abstract

The littoral tracts in Coastal Regulatory Zones (CRZ) of deltaic wetlands in Sunderbans of India are governed by complex fluvio-geomorphic process. The present paper debates the conflict of conservation policy against strategic impact assessment in Nayachar, which is an estuarine island encountering tidal fluctuation of more than 5 m. during peak monsoon. Any major structural intervention would obviously imperil the delicate hydro-morphology of the estuary leading to habitat loss, damaging major sources of nutrients to various aquatic life forms, and threatening nutrition and livelihood security of wetlanders. The most important causes of this biocide are global warming and the pollution of our waters.

The present paper reviews the government policy that declared its commitment to protect 220 km of coastline of state CRZ for protecting and improving the quality of the coastal environment and preventing, abating, and controlling environmental pollution in coastal areas. Through a case study over Nayachar Island chemical hub, conflicts in policy and EIA suggests reduction and dilution of its CRZ status.

Perusal of the study depicts that if the island of Nayachar is embanked and elevated, the intervention is likely to impair the navigational channel, thereby affecting the claimed “economic viability” of the hub itself. Further, it would encourage investment of multinational giants in low cost countries taking advantage of their lax environmental laws and ineffective regulations. The government is thus adopting a programme for export of the bulk of production at the cost of our natural resources, which is not a sustainable development.